

**Public Policy Position
SB 248**

The Animal Law Section is a voluntary membership section of the State Bar of Michigan, comprised of 267 members. The Animal Law Section is not the State Bar of Michigan and the position expressed herein is that of the Animal Law Section only and not the State Bar of Michigan. The State Bar's position is to support SB 248.

The Animal Law Section has a public policy decision-making body with 15 members. On June 14, 2023, the Section adopted its position after an electronic discussion and vote. 12 members voted in favor of the Section's position, 0 members voted against this position, 0 members abstained, 3 members did not vote.

Support

Explanation:

The Animal Law Section supports SB 248, which would amend the Revised Judicature Act to allow witnesses who are under 18 years of age to utilize a courtroom support dog. The current age limit is 16. The bill would also expand the definition of courtroom support dog so that a larger number of dogs could qualify for and be approved to fulfill this role. Courtroom support dogs are an appropriate accommodation for young witnesses and witnesses who are developmentally disabled or vulnerable adults. The dogs provide comfort and courage to witnesses testifying in particularly stressful situations. Courtroom support dogs serve the interests of justice, in that they enable young or otherwise vulnerable victims/witnesses to testify clearly and successfully. The presence of a courtroom support dog may also mitigate the traumatic effects of testifying.

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